1. (Amended) An article of commerce comprising:

(a) a longitudinally continuous web having a longitudinal down-web direction, a lateral cross-web direction, and lateral sides, with:

(i) superimposed first and second layers ~~sealingly engaged~~ secured together by seals along the lateral sides; wherein:

(A) the first layer comprises a gas permeable microbial barrier layer, and

(B) the second layer comprises a thermoplastic gas impermeable layer,

(ii) longitudinally spaced laterally extending lines of weakness in one of the first or second layer, ~~and~~

(iii) longitudinally spaced laterally extending lines of separation in the other first or second layer with the lines of separation paired with the lines of weakness; and,

(b) the seals between the layers being peelable seals delineating sides and an end of a space for receiving a product to be sterilized by sterilizing gas passed through the permeable layer.

2. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein the lines of weakness are in the first layer and the lines of separation are in the second layer.

3. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein the lines of weakness are in the second layer and the lines of separation are in the first layer.

4. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein the longitudinally continuous web forms a roll.

5. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein the paired laterally extending lines of weakness and laterally extending lines of separation in the first and second layers are superimposed.

6. (Original) The article of claim 5 wherein the longitudinally continuous web is repetatively folded back at regular intervals along the superimposed paired laterally extending line of weakness and laterally extending line of separation to form a pleated stack.

7. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein the first and second layers are sealed along the lateral sides with a peelable seal which is impervious to microbes.

8. (Cancelled)

9. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein the first layer is a thermoplastic gas permeable microbial barrier.

10. (Original) The article of claim 9 wherein the first layer is a spunbonded olefin gas permeable microbial barrier.

11. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein the second layer is transparent.

12. (Original) The article of claim 1 wherein the lines of weakness are lines of perforation.

13. (Original) The article of claim 2 wherein the lines of weakness are lines of perforation with a hole:land area ratio of about 15:1 to 25:1 with about 0.4 to 0.6 perforations per centimeter.

14. (Amended) An article of commerce comprising:

(a) a longitudinally continuous web having a longitudinal down-web direction, a lateral cross-web direction, and lateral ends; with:

(i) superimposed first and second layers ~~scalingly engaged~~ being sealed together by seals along one lateral end and along spaced side portions, wherein:

(A) the first layer comprises a gas permeable microbial barrier layer, and

(B) the second layer comprises a thermoplastic gas impermeable layer,

(ii) a longitudinally spaced series of paired laterally extending lines of weakness in the first and second layers, ~~and~~

(iii) wherein the first and second layers are sealed along a pair of laterally extending seal lines located proximate each paired lines of weakness with the individual laterally extending seal lines in each pair of laterally extending seal lines separated by a paired lines of weakness; and

(b) the seals between the layers being peelable seals delineating sides and an end of a

space to receive a product to be sterilized by sterilizing gas passed through the permeable layer.

15. (Original) The article of claim 14 wherein the longitudinally continuous web forms a roll.

16. (Original) The article of claim 14 wherein the paired laterally extending lines of weakness in the first and second layers are superimposed.

17. (Original) The article of claim 16 wherein the longitudinally continuous web is repetatively folded back at regular intervals along the superimposed paired laterally extending line of weakness and laterally extending line of separation to form a pleated stack

18. (Cancelled) The article of claim 14 wherein [(i) the first and second layers are peelably sealed with a seal which is] the seals and the layers are impervious to microbes [along the sealed lateral end, and (ii) each of the laterally extending seal lines form a peelable seal with a seal which is impervious to microbes].

19. (Original) The article of claim 14 wherein the first layer is a thermoplastic gas permeable microbial barrier.

20. (Original) The article of claim 19 wherein the first layer is a spunbonded olefin gas

permeable microbial barrier.

21. (Original) The article of claim 14 wherein the second layer is transparent.

22. (Original) The article of claim 14 wherein the lines of weakness in the first and second layers are lines of perforation.

23. (Original) The article of claim 22 wherein the line of perforation in the first layer has a hole:land area ratio of about 15:1 to 50:1 with about 0.2 to 0.6 perforations per centimeter.

24. (Original) An automated method of packaging a medical device, comprising:

(a) obtaining a longitudinally continuous web defining a plurality of breather pouches, including a leading pouch and an immediately trailing pouch; wherein:

i) each pouch has lateral sides, a leading longitudinal end and a trailing longitudinal end, and is comprised of superimposed first and second layers sealingly engaged along and proximate both lateral sides and the leading end so as to define a retention chamber, wherein:

(A) the first layer comprises a gas permeable microbial barrier layer, and

(B) the second layer comprises a thermoplastic gas impermeable layer, and

(ii) successive pouches are connected along laterally extending lines of

weakness in the first layer,

(b) automatically conveying the web in a machine direction until the leading pouch is positioned at a fill location,

(c) automatically transversely separating the first and second layers of the leading pouch along the trailing end of the leading pouch so as to open the trailing end of the leading pouch and thereby facilitate access to the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch,

(d) placing a medical device within the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch through the open trailing end of the leading pouch,

(e) sealing the trailing end of the leading pouch with the medical device retained within the retention chamber,

(f) automatically detaching the leading pouch from the trailing pouch along the line of weakness in the first layer between the leading pouch and the immediately trailing pouch after step (d), and

(g) repeating steps (b) through (f) for subsequent pouches in the web.

25. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the first layer is a thermoplastic gas permeable microbial barrier.

26. (Original) The method of claim 25 wherein the first layer is a spunbonded olefin gas permeable microbial barrier.

27. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the lines of weakness in the first layer are lines of perforation.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27 wherein the lines of perforation in the first layer have a hole:land area ratio of about 15:1 to 25:1 with about 0.4 to 0.6 perforations per centimeter.

29. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the medical device is placed within the retention chamber by hand.

30. (Original) The method of claim 24 wherein the trailing end of the leading pouch is sealed automatically upon input of an electronic signal that the medical device has been placed within the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch.

31. (Original) An automated method of packaging a medical device, comprising:

(a) obtaining a longitudinally continuous web defining a plurality of breather pouches, including a leading pouch and an immediately trailing pouch; wherein:

(i) each pouch has a first lateral end, a second lateral end, a leading longitudinal side and a trailing longitudinal side, and is comprised of superimposed first and second layers sealingly engaged along both longitudinal sides and the first lateral end so as to define a retention chamber, wherein:

(A) the first layer comprises a gas permeable microbial barrier layer, and

(B) the second layer comprises a thermoplastic gas impermeable layer, and

(iii) successive pouches are connected along paired laterally extending lines of weakness in the first and second layers,

(b) automatically conveying the web in a machine direction until the leading pouch is positioned at a fill location,

(c) automatically transversely separating the second layer of the leading pouch from the first layer of the leading pouch along the second end of the leading pouch so as to open the second end of the leading pouch and thereby facilitate access to the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch,

(d) placing a medical device within the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch through the open second end of the leading pouch,

(e) sealing the second end of the leading pouch with the medical device retained within the retention chamber,

(f) automatically detaching the leading pouch from the trailing pouch along the lines of weakness in the first and second layers between the leading pouch and the immediately trailing pouch after step (d), and

(g) repeating steps (b) through (f) for subsequent pouches in the web.

32. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein the first layer is a thermoplastic gas permeable microbial barrier.

33. (Original) The method of claim 32 wherein the first layer is a spunbonded olefin gas permeable microbial barrier.

34. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein the lines of weakness in the first and second layers are lines of perforation.

35. (Original) The method of claim 34 wherein the lines of perforation in the first layer have a hole:land area ratio of about 15:1 to 50:1 with about 0.2 to 0.6 perforations per centimeter.

36. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein the medical device is placed within the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch by hand.

37. (Original) The method of claim 31 wherein the second end of the leading pouch is sealed automatically upon input of an electronic signal that the medical device has been placed within the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch.

38. (Amended) An article of commerce comprising:

(a) a longitudinally continuous web having a longitudinal down-web direction, a lateral cross-web direction, and lateral sides, with:

(b) superimposed first and second layers ~~scalingly engaged~~ sealed together along the lateral sides to define bags for packaging, wherein both the first

and second layers are effective for preventing passage of microbes through the layer and at least the first layer is effective for permitting the passage of a sterilization gas,

(c) longitudinally spaced laterally extending lines of weakness in one of the first or second layer, ~~and~~

(d) longitudinally spaced laterally extending lines of separation in the other first or second layer with the lines of separation paired with the lines of weakness; and,

(e) the seals between the layers being peelable to fully separate the layers one from the other whereby to facilitate sterile access to items packaged in such bags without fear of contamination by residue from either layer, and

(f) the seals between the layers being peelable whereby to facilitate sterile access to items packaged in such bags.

39. (Previously Presented) The article of claim 38 wherein the first layer defines a surface area and the entire surface area of the first layer is effective for preventing passage of microbes through the layer and permitting the passage of a sterilization gas.

40. (Cancelled)

41. (Cancelled)

42. (Previously Presented) An automated method of packaging a medical device, comprising:

(a) obtaining a longitudinally continuous web defining a plurality of breather pouches, including a leading pouch and an immediately trailing pouch; wherein:

(i) each pouch has lateral sides, a leading longitudinal end and a trailing longitudinal end, and is comprised of superimposed first and second layers sealingly engaged along and proximate both lateral sides and the leading end so as to define a retention chamber, wherein both the first and second layers are effective for preventing passage of microbes through the layer and at least the first layer is effective for permitting the passage of a sterilization gas,

(ii) successive pouches are connected along laterally extending lines of weakness in the first layer,

(b) automatically conveying the web in a machine direction until the leading pouch is positioned at a fill location,

(c) automatically transversely separating the first and second layers of the leading pouch along the trailing end of the leading pouch so as to open the trailing end of the leading pouch and thereby facilitate access to the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch,

(d) placing a medical device within the retention chamber defined by the leading pouch through the open trailing end of the leading pouch,

(e) sealing the trailing end of the leading pouch with the medical device retained within the retention chamber,

(f) automatically detaching the leading pouch from the trailing pouch along the line of

weakness in the first layer between the leading pouch and the immediately trailing pouch after step (d), and

(g) repeating steps (b) through (f) for subsequent pouches in the web.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 wherein the first layer defines a surface area and the entire surface area of the first layer is effective for preventing passage of microbes through the layer and permitting the passage of a sterilization gas.

44. (Cancelled)

45. (Cancelled)

46. (Cancelled)

47. (Cancelled)

48. (Cancelled)

49. (Cancelled)

50. (New) A web for making sterilizable packages comprising:

a) an elongate strip of plastic material forming backs of a number of bags;

b) the plastic strip being impervious to microbes and sterilizing gasses;

c) a strip of microbial barrier material forming face layers, one for each of the bags, the material being impervious to microbes and permeable to sterilizing gasses;

d) seals between the strips to delineate individual bags each sealed at the sides and bottom and each with a top opening for the insertion of a sterilizable product;

e) each of the seals being fully peelable whereby products sequentially inserted into the bags and packaged by heat sealing to close the openings in the bags may be sterilized and subsequently accessed with out fear of contamination by residues of a package resulting from such package being opened; and,

f) spaced lines of weakness each in the web between two contiguous bags to delineate bag ends and provide for facile separation of the bags, one from another.

51. (New) The web of claim 50 wherein the barrier material is a spun bonded polyolefin material.

52. (New) The web of claim 50 wherein the lines pf weakness are lines of perforations with a hole:land area ratio of about 15:1 to 25:1 with about 0.4 to 0.6 perforations per centimeter.